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January 23, 2017

The Honorable Bill Nelson
Ranking Member
Committee on Commerce, Science,
and Transportation
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Bill:

Thank you for your thoughtful and well-researched letter of January 19. I appreciate you sharing your concerns about the impact of sea level and ocean temperature changes on Florida, other coastal communities and fisheries. As a resident of Florida who lives along the coast I certainly share your interest and concern about the impact of these changes on coastal areas.

In your letter you ask for a number of commitments from me. Let me preface the following by suggesting that we put aside for now the question of what is causing these changes, and agree to focus on addressing the impacts of those changes. With that understanding I would say that we are in complete agreement that the Department of Commerce should continue to research, monitor and report weather and climate information because that information is essential to everyday commerce and the safety of our citizens and communities.

Indeed, if confirmed, one of my first orders of business will be to begin meeting with NOAA scientists to become fully briefed on what they are seeing with respect to weather and climate information and how the Department can ensure that the National Weather Service continues to make advances to improve the timeliness and accuracy of weather forecasting. I also look forward to meeting with scientists from the National Marine Fisheries Service to learn how changes in ocean temperature patterns are affecting fishery stocks and allocation decisions. In addition, I look forward to learning about NOAA's ongoing efforts to assist coastal communities in coping with changes in sea level rise and storm intensity.

As you know from my hearing responses, I believe science should be left to scientists. If confirmed, I intend to see that the Department provides the public with as much factual and accurate data as we have available. It is public tax dollars that support the

Department's scientific research, and barring some national security concern, I see no valid reason to keep peer reviewed research from the public. To be clear, by peer review I mean scientific review and not a political filter.

In closing, if confirmed, I want to ensure the Department continues to attract Nobel-prize winning scientists and remains a global leader in all of the research it conducts. The Department's responsibilities are many and the public deserves to see them executed at a world class level.

Thank you again for your thoughtful letter. If confirmed, I look forward to being briefed on these issues, continuing our discussions, and working together to address the impacts of changes in sea level and ocean temperatures on coastal communities and fisheries.

Sincerely,



Wilbur L. Ross

cc: The Honorable John Thune, Chairman